

PAC Program's Positive Impact

by Mandy Otto

PAC Certified Independent Trainer

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I earned my trainer certification from the Teepa Snow Positive Approach® to Care (PAC) program in January of 2016. Since that time I have been training the Cambrian Senior Living caregiving team on a regular basis during staff meetings, in addition to occasionally offering more extensive training sessions throughout the year. And, most recently, we began offering a 60 minute weekly training session that takes place over a seven-week timeframe.

We began the first seven-week program as a mandatory educational series to be completed by our memory care team in Tecumseh. Twenty-two staff have attended to date. I made the training available at three different times each week to insure all shifts had a convenient time to work it into their schedules. The times that worked best for our shift changes were at 1pm, 2pm and 10pm. I took the training information outlined by the PAC program and split it up to nicely flow from week to week. Each week I would open the class with an ice breaker that related to our topic, and asked questions such as “if you had dementia and could no longer share with others, what would you want someone to know about you?”

When we first announced the mandatory training requirement, many of our staff admitted they were not very excited. However, once we began diving into the valuable tools of the program, the staff began to actually look forward to learning more each week. Offering three sessions kept the group size small which allowed staff to feel more comfortable asking questions. And as each week passed, by the staff became more and more engaged in both learning and sharing. I often reminded them “there is no right and wrong question.” If they didn’t want to ask a question verbally, paper was on the table and they could submit their question in writing to be shared anonymously later. At the end of the seven weeks, many staff even stated “I wish we had class today.” This comment made me realize the staff were truly appreciating the knowledge they were gaining.

By the sixth week, we had already covered the GEMS video so we then started digging deeper into a few of the specific gems. A family member of a married couple who live with us even shared a video from their parent’s life story which was created for their 50th wedding anniversary. The wife is currently a high sensory amber and the husband is currently an emerald. Staff were able to see who they were before these current GEMS stages and better understand their past; many of the staff were moved to tears. Teepa’s reminder that a person living with dementia wants you to know “I am who I was, but different” was enlightening.

Another successful session was when I role-played the different GEMS. I was able to do this as Teepa provided a webinar specifically for the PAC trainers. I used Teepa’s

scripts and role-played each GEMS state within the same scenario. Staff were successful in determining which GEMS state I was demonstrating, as well as which resident I was representing from our own setting. This effort was well received with laughter and smiles. It offered staff the perspective of *why* the GEMS may be behaving the way they are.

I am happy to report that this PAC training effort has been an important stepping stone in the pathway of increasing our staff morale. Implementation of what staff have learned has resulted in a decrease of negative behaviors and has allowed for more hours within each week to be filled with making moments meaningful. Teepa says “it takes a village to care for someone with dementia” and Cambrian Senior Living is the “village” of support for our residents and their families because of the dedication and commitment shown by our staff through this learning opportunity.

The hands-on caregiving team at Cambrian Senior Living is a very special group of compassionate individuals. It is so encouraging to witness first-hand how implementing this Positive Approach to Care impacts the quality of life of both the resident living with dementia, as well as those providing the care.

I want to personally thank Teepa Snow and her PAC team for leading the way, and changing the culture of dementia care. The skills that are taught become tools and properly using these tools has truly been a game changer for us at Cambrian Senior Living. -Mandy Otto, Life Enrichment Director

Here are some of the testimonials shared by our staff:

“Since starting PAC training classes, I can already see a big difference in the staff/resident interaction. The residents are responding and seem to be having more good days.” - Nicole, Nurse

“PAC has helped staff strengthen our approaches with our residents in such a positive way.” - Mathieu M, Resident Aide

“Training taught me that we are care partners not caregivers. I learned how to better assist residents based on their specific gem(s).” - Ashlynn C, Quality Assurance Assistant

“I benefited from learning the art of redirecting residents, this has become a lot easier with the PAC training.” - Alisha P, Resident Aide

“This training has given me more tools in my toolbox, and allowed me to feel more comfortable in my work environment. The trainings sessions allowed for the staff to have an open dialogue and created synergy.” - Kaitlin B, Life Enrichment Assistant

“PAC taught me to look more at the resident’s point of view and become a detective, while entering their world. I am more aware on how my body language and nonverbal cueing are important in my daily interactions with them.” - April T, Resident Aide

“PAC sessions have allowed me to pass medications successfully, a task that once was at times difficult, has now been simplified by understanding a better approach, which allows me to give better care to my resident.” - Patti R, Nurse

“PAC training has improved my confidence. I feel I can be more creative when working with our residents.” - Robin S, Life Enrichment Assistant

“I now have a better understanding of how to approach residents by understanding what GEMS state they are in and why those with memory loss may react the way they do. PAC has given me a better approach to use in my daily interactions.” - Marybeth L, Culinary Aid

“It works! Making the correlation with the GEMS and approaches has definitely made an impact on successfully managing behaviors. It has provided different options for different residents.” - Amy M, Director of Resident Care

Mandy Otto's Bio

The Baird family (maiden surname) is a close-knit family whose members are known for their longevity, centered in and around the small town of Grass Lake, Michigan. These two features afforded me the opportunity to know the matriarchs and patriarchs of my family intimately. For instance, my great-great grandmother Thelma lived to be 101 years old, and was very active both physically and cognitively. My father's dad, my grandfather, unfortunately succumbed to complications stemming from Alzheimer's. Bearing witness to his progressive decline prompted me to pursue a degree in Recreational Management with a focus on cognitive care, and additional training in the field of Recreational Therapy. Collectively my studies provided me with the foundation to develop and administer programs designed to enrich the life of senior citizens, families, and train staff, that were not available to members of my own family.

Following the completion of my degree from Indiana Wesleyan University, I began my professional career in field of long-term care. To date I have 19 overall years' of experience in long-term care, and 14+ years devoted specifically to the field of memory care. As I feel that education does not stop following the award of the degree I have challenged myself further by pursuing and obtaining additional certifications from Copper Ride Institute and Positive Approach to Care.

In addition, my quest to improve the quality of life for all individuals lead me to first work as a trainer at Curves, and later was a franchise owner myself for ten years with my mother. I continue to teach Zumba Gold to those living at Cambrian Senior Living, both in Tecumseh and South Lyon.

I mainly work out of our Tecumseh location and travel to our South Lyon location a few times a month where I train PAC, assist with PAC approaches in memory care, and am a resource for the Life Enrichment staff.

I am a volunteer with the Alzheimer's Association, Great Lakes Chapter. I led a monthly support group held at Cambrian Senior Living in Tecumseh where I also share my PAC

training. I serve on the Lenawee Walk to End Alzheimer's, as a committee member and am now the Co-Chair for the Lenawee Walk to End Alzheimer's for the past three years. I also serve on other committees in Lenawee County.

I also work closely to PAC trainer Tammy Jewell from Daybreak Adult Day Services, in Lenawee County, where we collaborate, share ideas and support each other monthly. In addition to my professional career, I enjoy spending time with my husband whom I have been married to for fourteen years and our two boys who are five and nine and my immediate family, close friends, time by the water and staying active.